

REMARKS

Claims 16-30 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 16, 21, 22 and 30 are amended. The amendments introduce no new matter. Reconsideration of the application based on the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action, on page 7, rejects claims 16-30 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite. Specifically, the Office Action asserts that "claim 1" is unclear and "the cam" recited in claims 21 and 22 lacks antecedent basis. Applicants understand the reference to claim 1 may be directed to claim 16 because claim 1 is canceled. Claims 16, 21 and 22 are amended to obviate this rejection. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under §112 is respectfully requested.

The Office Action, on page 2, rejects claims 16-30 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,749,970 to Fukuta et al. (hereinafter "Fukuta"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Without conceding the propriety of this rejection, and solely to advance prosecution of this application, claim 16 is amended to recite, among other features, (1) a lower portion formed from a distance between a lower end of the smoothing means and a position being nearly the same as the position of the lower end of the opening that corresponds to a lower side of the outer periphery surface of the pillar structure, and (2) the coating surface of the coating material supplied and coated to smooth between the upper side and the lower side of the outer periphery surface. Fukuta does not teach, nor can it reasonably be considered to have suggested, these features.

The Office Action, on pages 3 and 4, concedes that Fukuta does not teach a nozzle has a length in a longer direction which is shorter than the length between the both ends of the pillar structure, as recited in claim 16. To cure this deficiency, the Office Action asserts that

Fukuta would have rendered obvious this feature allegedly because Fukuta teaches a variable nozzle assembly to correspond to different lengths of the honeycomb structure to be coated and because this variety would offer greater control over the coating process.

Fukuta teaches an apparatus for coating an outer periphery of a columnar structural body comprising a holder, a coater, a feeder, a driving unit and a doctor blade for uniformly spreading the coating material around the outer periphery of the structural body (Abstract). Fukuta teaches that the holder consists of upper and lower pallets for the upper and lower sides of the structural body, in which the doctor blade can follow the surfaces of the upper and lower pallets (col. 4, lines 5-12). Further, with reference to at least Fig. 6c, Fukuta teaches a coater 29 that is smaller in length than the doctor blade 30. Based on this teaching, the Office Action reasons that because (1) the doctor blade 30 can at least span the distance between the upper and lower pallet, and (2) the coater 29 appears to be smaller in a vertical distance wise direction than the doctor 30, the coater 29 allegedly must also be shorter than the distance between the upper and lower pallets.

With reference to Fig. 2 of Applicants' specification, the present subject matter is directed, among other objects, to overcoming the disadvantages in the art as disclosed in JP-A-08-323727, and similarly Fukuta, in that the nozzle is usually disposed along the whole outer peripheral surface between both ends of the upper side and the lower side of the structural body such that the coating material is scraped by the smoothing plate flows down the lower side of the peripheral surface and collects in the form of a deposit resulting in a thick coating which cracks during the firing processes. Fukuta clearly does not teach the above-quoted features, nor does it contemplate such advantages.

As another example, Fukuta does not teach, nor can it reasonably be considered to have suggested, the coating material is supplied from the opening of a nozzle to the upper side of the outer peripheral surface of the pillar structure and coated thereon, and the coating

surface of the coating material supplied and coated is smoothed between the upper side and the lower side of the outer peripheral surface, as recited in claim 16. In contrast, Fukuta teaches that the nozzle is disposed along the whole outer peripheral surface of the columnar structural body.

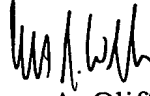
For at least the foregoing reasons, it is unreasonable to assert that Fukuta would have reasonably suggested, the combination of all of the features recited in independent claim 16. Additionally, claims 17-30 also would not have been reasonably suggested, by the applied reference for at least the respective dependence of these claims, directly or indirectly, on an allowable base claim, as well as for the separately patentable subject matter that each of these claims recites.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 16-30 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the applied reference are respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 16-30 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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